Rapture

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Rapture

by cactus_junkie

Summary

"Why go to all of this trouble? Why not just try and move on from what happened to you all of those years ago?"

Will smiled, a dreadful and twisted thing across his mouth that somehow managed to look graceful under the bleak rays of the sunrise as dawn broke.

"Maybe it's just my nature."

*

Four years on after the events of Exaltation - Will realises the last piece of the puzzle to becoming whole again lies in the hands of the one man who got away. Hannibal is the only one who can help Will seek his retribution.

Notes

Hello lovely readers - this is the sequel to my other fic, Exaltation. This story won't make much sense if you haven't read Exaltation, so I'd recommend making your way through that piece of work first :)

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Chapter Notes

I'd just like to say I've started this fic at a really bad time - I'm starting a new job soon that's going to be incredibly demanding and is probably going to mean updates are few and far in between, so please bear with me if updates only appear every few months.

I'm planning on this fic being shorter than Exaltation (lol it nearly killed me to write 258,551 words) but chapters will probably be quite long to make up for it. This story also has no beta, please ignore any of my terrible mistakes

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The boy was bigger than her by a good few inches. His sandy blonde hair shone like wheat in the Parisian sunlight, summer slowly beginning to ebb its way into the atmosphere.

He shoved her aside smugly as she reached for the handle bars of the slide, all of her efforts of climbing up the playground structure in vain now that she had been so unceremoniously pushed aside as she'd stood before the top of the slide, eyes wondering at its twisting, looping structure in excitement. The boy snickered as she gasped a little and stumbled, eyes wide as he slotted himself down to begin making his descent.

"C'est *vulgaire,"* she muttered at the boy, irritated.

The boy twisted his neck around to grin wickedly at her. "Tu es trop petit pour cette diapositive de toute façon. Pourquoi n'irais-tu pas jouer avec les autres *bébés*?"

"J e ne suis pas un bébé," she retorted, standing her ground.

The boy just laughed at her, letting go of the handles at the side of the slide and disappearing.

By some sort of twist of fate, the boy cried out suddenly, followed by a heavy *thump*, then a startled wailing. Frowning, she peered over the edge to observe.

The boy had somehow slid off the edge of the slide, dropping a small height onto the rubbery ground to a heap. He lay there crying, clutching at his grazed elbows and sniffling hysterically. She watched him for a moment, a small part of her enjoying the fact he'd fallen and hurt himself after being so inexplicably rude to her, but then the sight of his tears jerked something empathetic inside of her that told her she should go and check on the boy, or at least look around for his mother.

If anything, it would cease his wailing, which was starting to become grating.

Climbing back down the brightly painted red ladder, she made her way over to him where he continued to sniffle. *Pathetic*, she thought for a moment, but then the sight of his miserable face as he looked up at her made something soften in her again.

" S'en aller," he warbled at her, voice shaking with tears as he rubbed at his grazed elbows.

She stood a few inches away from him, eyes sweeping over the boy. " Ne pleure pas. Seuls les bébés pleurent."

The boy's faced twisted angrily at her, the subtle barb stinging as much as his grazed elbows. "Je ne pleure plus."

She crouched down, looking at his elbows. "Tout ira bien. Est-ce que ça fait mal?"

He shook his head begrudgingly, stumbling to his feet slowly. She took a step back, regarding him.

" Désolé je t'ai poussé. Je suis Maurice. Quel est votre nom?" the boy mumbled, looking over her small stature.

Her head tilted, almost bird like, dark curls and maroon eyes glinting in the sun. "Je te pardonne. Je suis Celeste."

Maurice opened his mouth, only to be interrupted.

"Celeste? Are you ok sweetheart?"

Maurice looked up, startled. The man before him was frowning, eyes fixed on the girl. Maurice didn't understand the language that came from his mouth.

"I'm fine Mama," the girl replied sweetly, smiling up at her mother.

The man grasped her hand, looking over at Maurice. "He pushed you."

"He did," Celeste replied. "But he only hurt himself."

Maurice blinked in fear at the man before him holding the girl's hand. His eyes were so blue.

"Well then," he sighed. "As long as you're alright."

"I am Mama," she insisted. "I want to stay and play with him. Can I?"

The man's jaw tightened, his eyes landing on Maurice again. "Plus besoin de pousser. Jouez bien avec elle."

Maurice just nodded firmly, scared of the look in the man's eyes. " Je suis désolé."

The Omega simply nodded, crouching down the scent his daughter, kissing the brown, tumbling curls of her head that were identical to his shorter ones. "Ten more minutes, ok? Papa wants to get home for lunch soon."

Celeste just nodded and smiled, grabbing Maurice by the hand and dragging him back to the red ladder that led to the top of the slide. " On va descendre ensemble, d'accord?"

Maurice just nodded, clutching her hand back.

"How satisfying it must be for you, to see the mechanisms of manipulation apparent so early on in your daughter," Will grumbled as he sat back down next to Hannibal.

Hannibal grinned self-righteously, lifting his thermos of coffee to his lips as he continued to watch Celeste's dark curls bobbing amongst the playground.

"She only looked at him the way a cat looks at a mouse for a moment," Hannibal replied. "Our daughter shares far too much of your empathy and moral compass to watch others squirm for any prolonged period of time."

Will looked over at his mate, unable to stop smiling. He looked so relaxed, despite the setting being the last place Will expected a man like Hannibal Lecter to look so natural in. But that was his speciality, wasn't it? Slotting himself into any role, any where, time or place he needed to. It just so happened that this role was that of a father watching his small daughter on a Saturday afternoon grappling with climbing frames in a playground nestled amongst the leafy boulevards of Paris. The man didn't even have the decency to look as tired or weary as the other parents watching their offspring flinging themselves along monkey bars and round-a-bouts. No, Hannibal Lecter was the picture of perfection; hair swept neatly away from his handsome face, crisp white shirt bearing no stains from grubby fingers, legs crossed neatly over each other as he watched his daughter play.

Will wanted to resent him for it, but he loved the Alpha too much to do so.

Will sighed, settling himself back into the loop of Hannibal's arm against the park bench and breathing in the comfort of his scent. "Please don't start describing our five year old daughter as a cat playing with a mouse it caught."

"Of course mylimasis," Hannibal purred into his ear, nose nudging along Will's curls as he scented him not so subtly.

Will swatted him playfully, but then tangled their fingers together and kissed Hannibal's jaw. The soft rumble of a purr fluttered in Hannibal's throat, eyes flitting regularly between his mate and their daughter, who was now apparently instructing her new friend to crouch down on his hands and knees so she could clamber up to stand on his back in an attempt to reach the hanging bars just ever so slightly out of her grasp.

So small, yet so resourceful. Hannibal grinned, pleased.

She was the perfect combination of Will and himself.

Hannibal glanced down again to see Will staring at her wistfully, eyes almost cloudy as he watched her play with the boy.

"Do you think she gets lonely?" Will asked suddenly.

Hannibal hummed. "I don't believe so; she has her parents, the other children she plays with at preschool, and Abigail. Her aunts in Canada when the occasion arises. Winston, too."

Hannibal flashed Will a grin at the Omega's scowl at the lack of mention of their dog, face smoothing out again when he said the pet's name.

"I guess," Will replied, chewing his lip and frowning.

He said nothing more on the matter, and Hannibal didn't push. They watched as a heavily pregnant Beta woman approached their daughter and the boy she was playing with, calling out to the boy and holding her hand out expectantly.

Will's shoulders heaved with a gentle sigh.

Later, when they were back home and sitting in one of the living rooms - even after four years in their Parisian home, Will still couldn't shake the disbelief he felt at the fact he'd gone from a trailer park to being someone with multiple lounges, drawing rooms and parlours - Will watched in content as Hannibal sat on the floor with their daughter, sheets of paper and colouring crayons spread out around them.

"Ar tau patiko žaisti su savo nauju draugu, mano meile?" Hannibal murmured to Celeste gently as he handed her the red crayon she pointed to in request.

Will's ears twitched at the use of Hannibal's mother tongue; some time ago, it had bothered him that his mate conversed with their daughter in Lithuanian, but now it softened his heart.

"Keeping secrets, huh?" Will asked with a grin that veiled the slight hurt behind his eyes.

Hannibal blinked at him, face carefully arranged. "Infant minds are incredible, Will. They absorb everything. She may not be able to speak Lithuanian as fluently as she will English and French, but still... it'll be there nonetheless, the more I speak to her in it."

"Guess I'm just feeling a little a left out," Will admitted, folding his arms across himself.

"I'd be more than happy to teach you," Hannibal offered, looking up at Will as Celeste walked on wobbly legs towards her mother.

Will hesitated; part of him wanted to say yes. But he'd seen the adoring way Hannibal looked at her when Celeste managed to move her mouth into the right shapes to make out words in Lithuanian, simple ones, but the beginnings of her grasp on the language. Will's mind wandered to the thought of Hannibal's childhood, a precious and tender thing filled with the memories of a sweet, dead sister that would never be whole again.

Who was Will to intrude on the small piece of comfort Celeste provided in Mischa's absence? Their daughter would never be Mischa, of course, but she filled the ache in Hannibal in a way that nothing else could. If Hannibal wanted to share his mother tongue with his daughter

and reminisce on his own childhood, then Will wasn't going to stop him. He wouldn't encroach on this aspect of Hannibal's bond with their daughter; it was the least he deserved, Will supposed, after running with her and hiding her from him for four months as he darted around the globe in their short-lived game of cat and mouse.

"It's ok," Will conceded, smiling. "Kind of feels like a special thing for just the two of you, you know?"

Hannibal hummed in appreciation, nodding in thanks.

Celeste stuck her tongue out as she scribbled a red ladder down onto the artisan paper Hannibal insisted on providing her for her artistic whims. As ridiculous as it was, Will supposed it was better than the debacle with the poster paints splashed up the surface of vintage, designer wall paper in the hall from a few years ago. Will remembered visibly flinching upon discovering *that* particular artistic endeavour of Celeste's, expecting Hannibal to be livid. He'd simply blinked sorrowfully at the state of the wallpaper and then sighed in defeat, announcing the poster paints would be living on a very high up shelf for the foreseeable future and then spent the next week pouring through catalogues of home décor boutiques in search of a replacement.

Celeste had just giggled and clapped at her creation, the then toddler her own biggest fan, apparently.

Celeste looked up at him, frown furrowing across her smooth forehead as her mind formulated the sentence in the right language. " Aš padariau. Jis kvailas, bet tikrai gražus."

Will always watched in amazement as she flicked between French, English and Lithuanian, although the latter came to her more slowly and with much greater concentration. She still sometimes mixed up the words, became frustrated when she knew she'd misplaced a Lithuanian word for English or French, but Hannibal's insistence that repeated exposure to as many languages as possible was no wasted feat had proven true. Her Lithuanian vocabulary was limited, as she only spoke the language with Hannibal, but somehow at the tender age of five years old, Will's daughter was trilingual.

Will shouldn't even be surprised, he supposed. She was Hannibal's daughter too, after all. She'd probably be a polyglot by the time she was ten, if Hannibal's gently murmured bedtime stories in Italian kept making an appearance.

"Do you like it Mama?" Celeste asked, brandishing her finished drawing to Will from the floor.

Will slipped from the sofa, lowering himself to sit on the floor next to Hannibal and Celeste. He took the offered drawing, studying it carefully. A haphazard red ladder and two half decent stick figures preparing the bolt down a twisting slide. Hannibal knew Will would stash it amongst the other heaps of messy, scrawled drawings he lovingly collated in a trunk chest in the library. It was filled with snippets of Celeste's childhood; her drawings and paintings, a lock of hair from her first haircut, a pair of mittens she'd worn in the winters as an infant, the tiny plastic band that had been wrapped around her wrist in the hospital after she'd been born.

"I love it," Will replied, smiling at her with that warmth that made her giggle with pride. "I'm glad you made a new friend."

"I think I'll play with him again when we go back to the playground," she announced. "Do you think he'll be there?"

Will hummed. "Maybe, if you're lucky. If we see them again, I'm sure I could ask his Mama if he wanted to have a playdate with you."

Celeste got to her feet, wrapping her tiny arms around Will's neck and grinning as he rubbed his nose along her forehead, scenting her. "Thank you Mama."

Will just swooped her up, relishing her burst of delighted laughter at being swept into his arms and carried to the kitchen.

"You coming to make us lunch then, Papa?" Will called to Hannibal, grinning over his shoulder at the Alpha still lounging on the floor as he watched them in adoration.

"Absolutely."

Later that night, when Will was tucking Celeste into bed, Hannibal watched from the doorway as his mate lingered longer than usual in her bedroom. It was their nightly ritual, that the three of them would lay together in Celeste's bed, cocooned together in a tangle of limbs whilst Will or Hannibal read to her. They'd read to her until she drifted into a flush-cheeked sleep, chocolate curls swept into a meticulous braid that Hannibal artfully arranged on her head every night despite the fact she would wake up every morning with tufts and waves sticking up at all angles, much like Will's own hair.

Will stroked her sleeping face, thumb sweeping over her brow done and nuzzled her small hand against his cheek.

Hannibal observed that same wistful look in Will's eyes as he finally stood and walked towards him after one last tender kiss to her forehead. Something warm stirred in his stomach every time he witnessed each doting kiss and embrace Will gave their daughter. Like a dream, Hannibal mused, except it was his reality and he got to relive what felt like a fantasy every day. It was beyond invaluable to him, and the thought of *losing* this dream made his skin crawl and his insides clench. There was nothing he wouldn't do to preserve this, to keep living this dream.

"She's getting so big," Will whispered as he carefully shut the door behind them. "I feel like she grows every day."

"Children have a habit of doing that," Hannibal agreed, smiling teasingly. "But yes; she is growing. Will you miss her, like this? So small and full of wonder..."

"I...," Will trailed off frowning. "Yes, in a way. In the same way I miss seeing her open her eyes for the first time, or when she was still crawling. I know she's only five, she's still my

baby, but... I can't help but feel like her childhood is going to run away from us in the blink of an eye."

Hannibal took his hand as they entered their own bedroom down the hall, pulling Will down into the sheets with him. "Childhood is a precious, if not precarious, phenomenon."

Will was quiet, staring at the ceiling of the bedroom for a few moments before rolling on to his side and facing Hannibal directly. He locked eyes with his mate, blue probing against maroon.

"I want another baby, Hannibal."

For a moment, Hannibal felt as if the air had been knocked from his lungs. Then, the seconds ticked over and he blinked in comprehension of what Will had asked of him.

"Another child?" he asked, slowly.

Will nodded gradually, fingertips ghosting over Hannibal's cheekbone. "Yes. I... I've been thinking about it for a while. It just feels right. I want - I don't know how to explain it."

"You don't have to explain it, Will," Hannibal assured him. "Wanting a child is entirely natural. Innate."

"Except it's different for me, isn't it?" Will breathed, eyes fogging with tears. "Sometimes I think I should run for the hills screaming at the thought of wanting to go through it again."

"What happened to you in the past will never happen again," Hannibal said lowly, voice possessive. "You went through things nobody should have to."

"I know," Will agreed. "And it's tainted with the memories of all the others that I lost when I was at Muskrat Farm - of losing Jasper. It's hard to even say his name sometimes."

"And yet?"

"And yet," Will swallowed, "I look at that little girl in the room down the corridor from ours and think, my *God*. She came from *me*; you and I created her and I brought her into this world and if that's not the single most amazing thing in this life then I don't know what is."

"It is, darling," Hannibal agreed. "It is."

"And this time everything could be *planned*," Will continued. "No surprises. No dilemmas of what to do, of whether I'm ready, whether I want to go through with it. I *want* to do everything right this time, and I want you by my side for everything. I know that it doesn't make a difference whether or not we planned for Celeste, but there's something about the fact I feel ready for once. That I look at her, and I want to do it all again because it feels like it makes sense. Do you understand?"

Hannibal's warm hand slid up to cup Will's face, eyes lost in Will's. "I understand it, Will, yes. Everything is different this time around, and you have the chance to do this in the way you've always deserved."

"I want another baby," Will breathed out, eyelids fluttering, "because I love you. Because I want to hold another perfect synthesis of you and me and the result of that love I feel for you in my arms again, brand new and world-changing. I want another baby because I want Celeste to grow up with a sibling, to have someone to share her childhood with, another living soul to feel all the love there is already in our little family. Because I'm not a goddamn child myself anymore; because we have a life that some people can only ever dream of. We have this ridiculous, beautiful house and we love each other and we have Celeste and we're *stable* and... Hannibal, I want this so *badly*."

"Then you'll have it," Hannibal murmured like some sort of sacred promise. "You will have it, Will. We'll have another baby."

Will's tears spilled, streaking his face. Hannibal pulled him close, curling his arms around the Omega tightly.

"I'm not crazy for wanting this, am I?" Will breathed cautiously. "I shouldn't just be thanking my lucky stars for what I already have?"

"Will," Hannibal rumbled, holding his face between his palms. "If this is what you want, you deserve it. Whatever it is your heart desires, I want you to have it and I won't let anything stop you from having what you want, after everything you've endured. Celeste could not have a better mother than you; I would love for nothing more than to see you raise another child in the way you have with her."

"We're good parents, aren't we?" Will smiled through his tears. "She's happy. She has everything she needs and wants."

"She wants for nothing," Hannibal assured him.

They both knew they weren't speaking about material wants. Hannibal had made sure that their daughter had the childhood that he nor Will ever got to have, the thought of being hungry or wanting for *anything* a complete impossibility - truthfully, Will thought Hannibal over-indulged her sometimes, but the outpouring of love they both had for their daughter was impossible to contain. No, they both knew that Will spoke of Will's paranoia, his dread at being lacking in the emotional and intellectual side of parenting that had caused him more than enough sleepless nights. The worry of not being good enough, of making a mistake so drastic it would be irreparable. Worries that never merged into anything more than that, anything more than panic. Celeste was cherished, nurtured, guided and most importantly, she was happy. Safe. *Loved*.

Hannibal found himself wanting to see all of that unfold for a second child of theirs just as badly as Will.

"I was, and will always be, blissfully happy with the life we have," Hannibal said softly into the dark of their bedroom. "In the back of my mind, I have wondered about what it would be like to have another child. But I've always been so grateful for what we have now that it was something I was content to keep at the back of my mind. If this is what you know you want Will, then I want it too. More than anything; because you're right, we *are* good parents. We

have the stability, the resources, but most importantly you and I would fight tooth and nail to make sure any child we had would always know just exactly how loved they are."

Will nodded slowly. "So you won't just be agreeing to this because you agree to everything I ask of you? You want to have another baby as much as I do?"

"It was always going to be your choice, my love. Children are gift from their mothers to their fathers," Hannibal replied. "But yes; I want this as much as you do."

"My heat will be here in two weeks," Will pointed out. "I want to try straight away."

"Then we will," Hannibal agreed. "We'll try for as long as it takes. If not this heat, then for as many heats as it takes."

Will grinned, cheeks flushing. "If it's anything like it was when I got pregnant with Celeste, I'm pretty sure we won't have to try for more than one heat."

Hannibal couldn't help but feel the Alphan smugness the statement caused; proof of his virility, of their compatibility, that they'd conceived their daughter without even attempting to all those years ago in Cuba. Hannibal had pondered for a long time how it had happened, considering they'd been using protection. The only way it could have happened was if Will had gone into heat earlier than they'd realised, or his heat had lingered for longer than usual, during which time they wouldn't have been using protection at all. They only needed it during Will's heats, the four times a year it was possible for Omegas to conceive.

"I hope so," Hannibal murmured. "I don't want for you to have wait."

Will remained silent, eyes assessing Hannibal's face carefully - ever perceptive. "What is it?"

"Nothing, my love," Hannibal assured him. "I just hope time is on our side."

Will narrowed his eyes. "What? You think my biological clock is ticking? Hannibal, I'm only twenty-five."

"Not you, Will, no. It's my own clock I'm thinking of."

Will moved suddenly, rolling them in the blink of an eye so that he straddled Hannibal's hips and pressed the palms of his hands firmly down onto Hannibal's chest. "People have kids later on in life all the time."

"They do," Hannibal agreed. "But the chances of conceiving do decrease."

"I'm pretty sure you're in much better health than other Alphas who are fifty," Will mused, trailing a finger down Hannibal's neck.

"I would like to think so," Hannibal chuckled. "Regardless, it's something to bear in mind, in case we can't conceive during your next heat."

Will leant down, stretching himself out over his mate until their lips were inches apart, his breath warm as it ghosted over Hannibal's skin. "I have every faith in you that you'll give me

another baby, *Alpha*."

Hannibal's stomach coiled with sudden heat, hands grasping Will by the back of his head as he snarled and pulled him down to kiss him fiercely.

"Bibi!" Celeste cried enthusiastically as she threw herself at Abigail's legs.

Abigail smiled, leaning down to kiss the top of Celeste's head as her arms wrapped around her thighs. "Hey there Lettie. I've missed you."

Abigail didn't manage to get another word out before she was being pulled along by the hand to Celeste's playroom, one of the many drawing rooms Hannibal had converted into a space just to house all of Celeste's toys. Will thought of the beat up baseball glove and ball that had been one of his only forms of entertainment when he was growing up; his daughter was spoilt *rotten* by Hannibal.

Will trailed after them, grinning as Celeste proudly showed off the latest addition to the playroom.

"Papa got me a piano," she beamed up at Abigail. "I can't really play it yet, but Papa said he's going to teach me. Then I can play the big one in Papa's study one day."

The baby grand piano had been spotted by Celeste in a window display one afternoon; she coyly curled her fingers around Hannibal's hand and looked up at him with an angelic smile that Will knew all too well; she'd crafted it after Hannibal's own devastatingly handsome, persuasive grin after all, and Will wasn't sure if it was the result of inheriting Hannibal's penchant for manipulation, or because she was able to empathise with him so entirely that she was able to reconstruct a version of it for herself like Will would have been able to. It all took was one *"Do you think I could play your piano one day, Papa? I could practice on one like that..."* from Celeste, and Hannibal was waltzing into the store with his black Amex card brandished at the ready.

Will just found it amusing to see the Chesapeake Ripper thwarted and wrapped around the finger of a five year old girl who was just about tall enough to be eye-level with Hannibal's kneecaps.

"I'm sure you'll be even better than him one day," Abigail grinned. "It's beautiful Lettie."

"Thank you Bibi," Celeste responded proudly, fingers carefully pushing down on the ivory keys.

Will's heart warmed at the nicknames the pair shared; Celeste had struggled to pronounce '*Abigail*' when she was still learning to talk, and so had taken to simply addressing her as 'Bibi' - Will amusedly supposed it was near enough. Abigail had been an on-off au paire nanny of sorts for Will and Hannibal for the last few years. She was an exchange student at the Pantheon-Sorbonne University Hannibal worked at, and upon reluctantly admitting to Hannibal one day that she was struggling to keep herself afloat financially, Hannibal had

offered her the role of looking after Celeste during Will's heats, weekends when Hannibal wanted to whisk Will away to the coast in the south of France or when they were both indisposed with work commitments.

Will had been reluctant at first, but upon meeting Abigail, Will understood why his Alpha had taken such a liking to the young Omega. The bond Will had formed with Abigail was almost immediate, and he cared for her like she was their adopted daughter despite the gap in their age being only seven years. After she'd finished her exchange program, she'd decided to stay in Paris.

"There's not much waiting for me back in Minnesota," Abigail had told him softly, when he'd asked about her plans for the future. "Besides, I've fallen in love with Paris, corny piece of shit that I am."

Their arrangement worked well; for the four days Will was indisposed during his heat with Hannibal, Abigail came to stay and looked after Celeste. They had enough space within Hannibal's ridiculously large four floored property (Will still struggled to think of it as 'theirs') to not cross paths during Will's heat, and it eased Will's anxieties knowing their daughter was still at home, cared for by someone they trusted. Abigail would go home during the day when Celeste was at pre-school and come back in the middle of the day to feed and walk Winston. She would pick Celeste up later in the afternoon and bring her home and stay the night until the next morning when Celeste needed to go to school again. Their arrangement was obviously financially beneficial for Abigail, who had been grateful for the money to begin with, but now reluctantly accepted payment from Hannibal after Will's heats finished. She utterly adored Celeste, and didn't need a dime to be asked to look after her.

Will just rolled his eyes and grinned at her. "Just take the money Abigail. He'll only spend it on something ridiculous and unnecessary otherwise."

Now, as he watched Abigail listen patiently to Celeste explain which character Abigail was going to be as she handed her a doll, Will was loathe to interrupt them, but his heat was drawing closer and closer.

"Celeste," he said softly, leaning against the door frame. "Come here, sweetheart."

Celeste looked up, noticing the fuzzy look Will bore in his eyes. She still didn't quite understand why Will and Hannibal retreated up to the top floor where Will had crafted himself a nest specifically for his heats every couple of months, but she didn't find it so strange anymore.

"Are you ok Mama?" Celeste asked, reaching her arms up to be lifted in to Will's. "You feel all warm."

"Mmm," Will responded, scenting her thoroughly. "I need to go and rest for a few days, but Abigail is going to be here just like she always is, ok? Promise me you'll be good."

Celeste just nodded, clutching the collar of Will's shirt. "I hope you feel better soon."

"I will," Will promised her, kissing her temple. "I have to go and lie down now, but Papa will be home from work soon and you can have dinner with him and Abigail."

"You won't have dinner with us?" Celeste sighed.

"I won't be well enough, I'm sorry," Will apologised to her. "But when I'm better again in a few days, I promise me and you can do whatever you like."

"That's alright Mama," Celeste assured him, patting his cheek with her small hand. "I'm gonna play with Bibi now."

Will kissed her curls one last time, squeezing her tightly, then set her down. Abigail gave him a sympathetic glance only another Omega could have given him, before fixing her face into another beaming smile as Celeste returned to her from where Will stood.

Will lingered to gaze over them for a moment longer, before quietly shutting the door and slipping away upstairs.

Hannibal could *feel* Will's scent on the back of his tongue as he descended the stairs to the top floor. His mouth watered, eager to have Will in his arms and drink down his scent.

When he opened the door to the bedroom - or rather, specifically Will's nest - Will was not in bed. Hannibal found him curled up in the sunken bath in the ensuite, bubbles so high in the water they reached Will's chin.

"Darling," Hannibal sighed softly. "How are you feeling?"

Will's pupils dilated as Hannibal neared. He didn't answer, simply rising from the water in a fluid motion, skin shining wet and curls dripping. His eyes blazed as he stepped out of the bath, teeth bared with a soft snarl. Hannibal's heart raced.

"Undress," Will uttered darkly, stalking closer to Hannibal.

Hannibal obeyed the command, fingers tugging his tie loose and shucking his clothes as quickly as possible. Will pounced on him when he was finally naked, lips locking together and hands fisting Hannibal's hair. Hannibal hoisted him up, Will's legs locked around Hannibal's hips as he carried the Omega to bed.

Will smelt heavenly; he always did. If Hannibal could bottle his scent and wear it, he would. He licked along Will's throat, groaning at the flavours and heady mix of amber and toffee, orchids and orange and patchouli.

He had Will flipped onto his front and pinned within moments, sinking his teeth into Will's bond bite over his mating gland with a passionate savagery that had Will hissing.

"*Yes*," Will rasped, eyes rolling back in his head.

The amount of slick seeping between Will's legs made Hannibal's blood sing, not wasting any time with stretching him; he was achingly hard as he slid into Will with no resistance. The Omega purred at the sensation of being filled, fingers knotted in the bed sheets.

"Present for me," Hannibal snarled softly against the oozing bite on Will's neck, squeezing Will's hips.

Will shuddered at the command, immediately shifting to angle his hips up for Hannibal and arching his back. Hannibal released a long, heavy exhale through his nose, shutting his eyes at the sensation of being sheathed by Will's slick, hot walls as they clenched around his cock. It was the first time they'd spent a heat together without protection, no barriers of condoms between them. To be inside of Will like this during his heat almost felt otherworldly.

"So good for me, Will," Hannibal purred, hips beginning to grind against Will. "You have no idea how you feel around me, mylimasis."

Will pushed his hips back eagerly. "Then show me."

Hannibal gripped Will around his narrow waist harsh enough to bruise, thrusting forwards brutally. Will bit into the pillow before him, the hard, measured thrusts enough to send him flying up the bed if it weren't for Hannibal's hands keeping him firmly in place. It was raw and primal and *exactly* what Will wanted.

Fucking Will like this tested Hannibal's endurance; the sight of his cock sliding in and out of Will's dripping hole, the way the light shone off of the skin on Will's back as he panted and moaned into the bed, had him clenching his teeth and resisting the urge to knot Will then and there. Hannibal bent over him, planting his hands on either side of Will's against the mattress, and fucked into him roughly, grunting as the room was filled with the sound of skin slapping against skin and their heavy breathing.

"*Fuck*, Hannibal," Will gasped as heat began to rise in his belly. "Just like that, don't stop."

Hannibal's teeth found his bond bite again, sucking against the blood still oozing there. The urge to bite, claim and fuck was near insatiable.

"Will," Hannibal groaned, teeth slick with blood. "I'm going to fill you to burst, my love."

Will made a strangled sound at the words, his first orgasm ripping through him with surprise; he hadn't expected Hannibal to say such a thing, and he hadn't expected to find himself so unbearably turned *on* by it. The clench of Will's hole around him brought Hannibal closer to the edge, his hole fluttering in encouragement of a knot.

"Hannibal," Will mewled, face still scrunched up with the aftershocks of his orgasm. "Oh fuck, I want it."

"Hm?" Hannibal sounded above him, pushing into Will faster, harder. "Tell me what you want, Will."

"Your knot," Will gasped out, squirming. "I want to feel it, want you to come."

"I'm going to keep you so full," Hannibal growled into his ear, knot swelling. "You'll be walking out of your nest *dripping* with it."

"Yes, *yes*," Will pleaded, feeling the base of Hannibal's knot pushing at his rim. "I want you to *breed* me Hannibal, *Alpha* - "

Hannibal came, hips stuttering forwards as his knot buried deep inside of Will. They groaned in unison, the sensation of Hannibal's come flooding Will's insides enough to make Hannibal's eyes flutter closed and Will began to harden himself again. Hannibal eased them forwards and onto their sides, Will's back flush against Hannibal's chest as they lay locked together by Hannibal's knot. Hannibal's fingers wrapped around Will's cock, stroking it to full hard hardness again and sinking his teeth into the juncture of Will's neck and shoulder. Will sobbed, throwing his head back against the pillows beneath them, white hot heat building in his groin again. It took moments for Will to tip over the edge once more, shuddering and convulsing against Hannibal.

Hannibal hissed a breath out between his teeth as Will came, stroking him through it and feeling Will's walls grip around his knot, coaxing another wave of semen from Hannibal.

"There you go, darling," Hannibal groaned, hand splayed wide on Will's belly that was covered with his own spend. "Take it, that's it."

"You're so *deep*, Hannibal," Will near sobbed. "God I want you to put another baby in me, so fucking much."

"I will," Hannibal shushed him gently, fingers trailing up to tease one of Will's nipples. "As many as you want."

Will just panted, grinning and tipping his head back to Hannibal's shoulder as he felt the Alpha shudder and another release painted his insides.

"Again," Will snarled, riding Hannibal mercilessly. "I need you to knot me again."

It was the middle of the night, or early morning, Hannibal didn't know. He'd lost track of time.

"Harder," Hannibal growled back at him, eyes locked together as their foreheads touched. "Take me deeper Will, that's it."

Will thrust his hips down, nails scraping through the greying hair on Hannibal's chest. Hannibal wrapped his fingers around Will's cock, stroking him in time with his thrusts.

"*Oh*," Will choked out, eyes rolling back in his head. "I'm gonna come, please - "

Hannibal gripped him harder, fixated on Will's skin glimmering with sweat in the low lighting of the nest. "Come for me Will, I've got you. Let me see."

Will's breath caught in his throat, coming as he slammed his hips down onto Hannibal's cock. His come splashed along his own chest, dripping down Hannibal's fist and filling the air with the mouth watering scent that clung to the whole room. Will jerked and whined when he watched Hannibal bring his hand up to his mouth, licking away Will's come with a muffled moan; the sight alone made Will's cock twitch, another dribble of come appearing as Hannibal's tongue swept into the webs of his own fingers.

"You taste like nothing else," Hannibal confessed in amazement, as if he'd never tasted Will before.

"Knot," Will pleaded, near hysterical. "Now, please Hannibal."

"Ssh," Hannibal soothed him. "I know what you need, don't worry. Let me give it you, mylimasis."

Hannibal planted his feet out flat on the bed, pulling Will down roughly as he fucked *up*, his hips snapping in fervently. The sensation was overwhelming, made Will feel as if he couldn't breathe, but it was so *good*, and then Hannibal's knot was catching and -

"Thank you, thank you," Will cried, clawing at Hannibal's throat.

Will sank his teeth into the front of Hannibal's neck, re-opening his own bond bite on the Alpha as he came. He could feel every inch of Hannibal inside of him, feel his knot and his cock twitching as he was filled deeply, entirely. Hannibal clutched the back of his head, keeping Will's teeth fixed to his bond bite as blood smeared his lips.

Will's hand shook as he placed as hand over his belly, revelling at the sensation of feeling so full already. His stomach was already slightly distended from the amount of Hannibal's seed buried in him. Hannibal placed a hand of his own against Will's stomach, a pleased rumble coming from his chest as he felt the swell of Will's stomach, and faintly, if he concentrated enough, the twitch of his knot as Will's sweet insides pulled another orgasm from him.

"I can't wait to see our baby start growing," Hannibal rumbled against Will's ear, stroking his stomach. "You'll fill out so beautifully, Will."

"*Jesus* Hannibal," Will whimpered. "Since when did talking about knocking me up sound so good?"

Hannibal grinned darkly. "Do you like it? Hearing me talk about how deep and hard I'm going to bury myself in you and breed you?"

Will trembled, flushing red. Slick gushed from him, dripping out around Hannibal's cock. "I... *yes*. A lot."

"Good," Hannibal whispered, breath ghosting over his skin. "Because that's exactly what I'm going to do."

"Oh fuck, *fuck,*" Will wept, fingers gripping the edge of the faucet basin.

His heat was nearing its end, the peak of it subsiding into hazy, slow fucking and a warmth that rippled through him rather than a burning searing that couldn't be sated by anything other than Hannibal's knot. He'd ventured into the bathroom in an attempt to brush his teeth, only to have Hannibal follow him in and grip him by the scruff of his neck as he sank into Will's pliant, slick entrance.

"Good, Will, that's it," Hannibal growled, "Just a little more for me. You want it to catch, don't you?"

Will watched Hannibal from the mirror in front of them, savouring the curl of his lip and the gleam in his eyes as he fucked Will over the counter. He nodded frantically, biting his lip.

"Then you need me to fill you up as much as I can," Hannibal purred, gripping the back of Will's neck tightly as he kept him bent over. "As much as you can take. And you can take it, can't you?"

Hannibal's cock was hitting all the right places, making him squirm against the counter, head held up so he had no choice but to watch the two of them in the mirror, fucking like their lives depended on it. Tears of overwhelmed, oversensitive pleasure clouded Will's vision.

"Alpha," Will breathed out shakily, every nerve in his body tingling in that too-much-too-good way. He didn't think he was even capable of stringing a sentence together coherently with the way Hannibal was taking him from behind.

"It's alright, Will," Hannibal soothed him. "You don't have to think, don't have to worry. Just let me take care of you, knot you until there's so much of my seed inside of you that you get what you want."

All it took was the feel of Hannibal's deft fingers wrapping around his weeping cock and his teeth sinking into his oozing bond bite again for Will to come, warmth splattering across the basin and Hannibal's hand. Hannibal snarled, fingers lifting up and prying their way into Will's gaping, gasping mouth as he shuddered violently through the waves of his orgasm.

Will keened, lashes fluttering as Hannibal fed him his own cum, fingers rubbing the liquid against his tongue and his thumb digging into his jaw. Hannibal hissed as he came, knot pushing past Will's rim once more and sealing them together. He kept his eyes fixed on Will's mouth sucking against the digits of his hand, his own toes curling at the eroticism of the sight. He ground his hips against Will's cheeks, the movement making his knot tug and stir within Will, who in turn gasped at the sensation and spasmed in Hannibal's arms.

"Too much," Will sobbed. "Please Hannibal, it's too much!"

"Ssh," Hannibal hushed him, not relenting with the slow thrusts and grinding of his hips that dragged his knot against the oversensitive walls of his mate. "I've got you, it's alright. I know what you need."

Will let out a overwrought groan, head drooping and hanging between his shoulders. "Please... Hannibal, please."

Will wasn't even sure what he was pleading for anymore. Hannibal kept driving his hips forwards in maddeningly slow, measured movements, his knot catching against Will's sweet spot as his Alpha kept cumming in waves.

"You've done so well, Will," Hannibal praised him, nuzzling his cheek against the bloody bite at the back of Will's neck. "You'll take all my seed and turn it into something magical for us, won't you?"

"*Yes*," Will panted, brow creased at the overstimulation. "Thank you, thank - *fuck* - thank you Hannibal."

Hannibal buried his nose into Will's sweat damp curls. "I will always give you what you want, mylimasis."

Will emerged from his nest back into reality the next day feeling dizzy. His cheeks turned red when Hannibal purred at the sight of Will's bloated stomach, still so stuffed to the brim with Hannibal's spend. He was going to be wet for days.

"She's an absolute delight to have in my classroom," Madame Boucher gushed enthusiastically. "She applies herself so well to everything she does, as well as helping her classmates whenever she can. You've raised a truly wonderful child."

Hannibal's lips tugged up into a warm, pleased smile. He knew all of this already, of course, but hearing another confirm his daughter was such an exceptional child only made the satisfaction deeper. Celeste's annual parents' evening had come around again, he and Will sat across the table from Celeste's class teacher as their daughter swung her little legs in the air on her own chair, too small to reach the floor from where she sat. Hannibal fondly stroked an errant curl out of her face.

"I'm glad to hear," Hannibal responded. "She enjoys school very much; I can only thank you, Madame Boucher."

"She's a true credit to the both of you," the Omega smiled softly. "Celeste tells me you're teaching her the piano?"

Her eyes wandered to Will, as if she expected him to be the musical one of the pair that was coaching their daughter in a shared musical passion. Will cleared his throat, smiling apologetically.

"Ah, that would be Hannibal's area of expertise," Will confessed. "I've never known how to play the piano."

Will had wanted to, once upon a time; had even thought about joining his school's music group to learn. But that had been before, a time that existed prior to when he'd been snatched from the streets and sold to Mason Verger like livestock.

Will supressed a shudder.

"I could teach you Mama, when I know how to do it too," Celeste offered, beaming up at Will.

"You see?" Madame Boucher laughed softly. "Always willing to help, our Celeste."

When their allotted appointment time finished and the parents of the next child on Madame Boucher's list started hovering by the table, Will and Hannibal took their leave, Will grasping Celeste's hand in his own as they made their way to the exit of the school.

Will groaned when he saw who was entering just as they were about to leave.

Patrice Cadieux and his smarmy mate, Stephane, appeared before them with their sullen brood like a bad dream.

The Omega, Will thought in amusement, had become somewhat of a grandiose pain in Will's backside ever since Celeste had been at school. The presence of parents like Patrice Cadieux were an unfortunate part of sending Celeste to a school like this one, private and prestigious, catering to international and French students alike. Will had argued about sending Celeste to a *normal* school, one that didn't come with extortionate fees, but Hannibal was determined that Celeste's education was going to be nothing less than exceptional. Will didn't like it, but didn't argue about it anymore when he saw how well Celeste had settled in and enjoyed school. He wasn't going to rip her out of school when she was clearly happy there, no matter how much he disagreed with paying for their daughter's education.

Patrice was one of those over-involved, snobby and *judgemental* Omegas that made it their business to know everyone else's business; his world was small and pathetic, his existence almost tragic to Will. One of those Omegas that bonded the first rich Alpha that had appeared, not out of love, but self-preservation - Will supposed it looked like that was the case with he and Hannibal too on the outside, their obvious age gap and his very apparent demeanour a stark contrast to Hannibal's well-bred charm and social standing. Patrice and his mate were wealthy, and Patrice made sure everyone knew it. He and his three children were always dripping with designer labels, Patrice's clothes tailor made to show off his bond bite, accentuated with gold chains and jewels. He was a trophy mate, and proud of it. His Alpha, Stephane, made Will want to curl his lip and snarl; his eyes always lingered too long in places they shouldn't.

"Good evening Will," Patrice greeted him. "Doctor Lecter, it's a pleasure, as always."

Patrice held his hand out expectantly at Hannibal, who graciously took his hand in return and bent in a swift motion to bow his head to Patrice's knuckles without actually making contact with his skin. Stephane looked eagerly at Will, waiting for him to hold his own hand out, or at least tilt his head to offer kisses in the air on either side of their faces. Will aborted the eye roll he felt coming - the gesture was so archaic, so entitled and ludicrous. He gave Stephane a withering smile instead.

"Hello Patrice."

Patrice bent over at the waist slightly, grinning down at Celeste. "I hope your teacher had good things to say to your Papa and Mama, Celeste."

Celeste just smiled politely back at him. "She did."

Patrice straightened himself, hand smoothing down the hair of his youngest son who was in Celeste's class. He squirmed away from the touch, darting off with his two older sisters to play with the friends they'd spotted across the room. "Laurent tells me you always help him in your numeracy lessons. Your Mama and Papa have taught you to be very kind."

"She takes after Will," Hannibal cut in smoothly, before Patrice could say another word. "Always a shining beacon of example, aren't you darling?"

Will admitted he found it satisfying to watch Patrice's eyes flash with jealousy as Hannibal squeezed his waist and drew him close into his side, calling him darling - Will knew just how damn good it felt to be on the reciprocating end of being called '*darling'* by Hannibal Lecter. Will caught the way Stephane's eyes lingered on Will's throat, and then the re-opened bond bite on the front of Hannibal's neck that appeared over the top of his collar, nearly done healing after he and Hannibal had torn their teeth into each other repeatedly during his heat a few weeks ago.

"You know Will, you really must join us for our coffee mornings some time soon," Patrice sighed dramatically. "We could use a fresh face to spice up our mornings a bit - there's only so much us stay at home mothers can talk about, after all. I'm sure you'd have much more interesting stories to bring to the table."

"Unfortunately I'll have to decline, Patrice," Will smiled forcibly. "Interpol doesn't let me take mornings off to sit around gossiping."

Patrice's eyes flashed at the challenge. "Ah yes, your important career. I forget that's why you must only appear at the school gates a few times a week to drop your daughter off, leaving your poor mate to do the school run the rest of the time when he has much more important things to be attending to."

"I can assure you that there is *nothing* more important for my mate to attend to than our daughter," Will bristled, on the verge of snarling at the haughty Omega before him.

Hannibal was quite enjoying witnessing his Will snapping at the other Omega before them.

"And I assume it'll be the only child your poor Alpha ever has to attend to, you place so little importance on your family and the rest of your energy on your career," Patrice laughed dryly, smiling at Hannibal in what was supposed to be a flirtatious manner and preening, tilting his neck to bare his skin in an attempt at not so subtle seduction.

It only served to make Hannibal disgusted.

"You'd better be careful, Will, Alphas have left their Omegas for less," Patrice continued. "It wouldn't be hard for someone to come along and give him what he wants."

Will wrenched himself free from Hannibal's grasp; Hannibal let him go, delighted at the anger twisting over Will's face. He pulled Celeste close, pre-emptively placing his hands over her ears to muffle the verbal onslaught he knew was about to come from Will.

"Flirt with my mate again and I'll have you on your fucking ass before you can even blink," Will snarled. "You have no business sticking your nose into my bond, you empty headed *bitch*."

Patrice looked as if he'd been slapped, jaw dropping and stepping back to Stephane.

"Come now, Will, don't make a scene," Stephane reprimanded him. "There's no need to get nasty, is there? Why don't you both just calm down, I - "

"You wouldn't know nasty if it hit you in the fucking face, you smug piece of shit," Will scoffed, not backing down. "Maybe if you spent half as much time making your mate happy as you do fucking other Omegas on the side, Patrice might not be so bitter and twisted to everyone he comes across."

Hannibal's mouth watered; he revelled in Will's sharp tongue.

"Doctor Lecter," Stephane choked out, eyes wide, desperately imploring the other Alpha to reign his mate in. "Are you going to let him speak to me like that?"

Hannibal smiled politely. "Will may speak in whatever manner he wishes. I have no control over that."

"What sort of example are you setting for your daughter, letting her see you conduct yourself so poorly?" Stephane snarled at Will, face turning red.

"She'll learn that her mother doesn't simper to bull-headed Alphas or self-righteous Omegas, and neither should she," Will spat.

"You're embarrassing yourself, and most importantly, you're embarrassing your mate Will," Patrice snapped at him. "Showing yourself up as the common, backwater dirt that you are."

Will laughed at the snipe; it didn't hurt him in the way he knew Patrice had intended it to. "I've never pretended to be anything but - you're so acrimonious you don't know how to be anything else anymore, do you? I'm sorry you have to force yourself to be happy with *your* life, but I don't; maybe you should teach your children that before they follow your example and let the first Alpha with a fat wallet snatch them up?"

"How *dare* you," Patrice hissed, stepping forwards only to be wrenched back by Stephane. "You're nothing but a gold digging *whore*, everyone can see it!"

Will smirked, leaning in close and invading Patrice's personal space. He didn't miss the way Stephane's nostrils flared and his pupils dilated as Will came closer.

"Sure you aren't just projecting, sweetheart?" Will sneered.

Patrice's hand flew up, aiming to claw across Will's face in a seething swipe of anger. Will stepped back swiftly, missing Patrice's assault elegantly; he'd seen it coming from a mile away.

Will didn't stop smiling as Patrice seethed before him. There was something deadly swimming in the Omega's eyes beneath the blue of his irises that made Patrice shudder, Stephane curling his lip at him.

"Try that again. Go on."

"*You* - you evil, malicious - " Patrice spluttered.

"I think you need to go and calm down," Will cut him off condescendingly with a sickly sweet look of fake concern. "Wouldn't want such a delicate, mild-mannered Omega getting himself all riled up by the likes of *me*, would you?"

"You're a disgrace to our kind," Patrice accused him, voice shaking and furious. "You're not Omegan at all, you *brute*."

Will smiled viciously. "Oh, I think my Alpha would disagree with you on that one. Haven't you noticed how deeply his throat is marked with my teeth? Maybe you want to see my bond bite too, in case you were wondering just how satisfied Hannibal is with the kind of Omega *I* am."

"We're leaving," Stephane growled, glowering at Will. "I won't allow you to terrorise my mate a moment longer."

Will leaned back, blinked demurely. "Of course. Have a lovely parents' evening, won't you? I'm sure Madame Boucher has plenty to say about how well your son receives my daughter's help in their numeracy lessons."

Before either Stephane or Patrice could open their mouths again, Will was slinking away, exiting the school building like a wraith. They stood in open mouthed shock, looking at Hannibal in disbelief as he removed his hands from Celeste's ears.

"Doctor Lecter, this is *absurd*," Stephane spluttered at the other Alpha. "Your Omega - "

"Will, Monsieur Cadieux," Hannibal corrected him immediately. "Please do not address him solely as 'my Omega'."

"He's out of control," Stephane insisted, flustered. "You really ought to put an end to that."

"I will do no such thing. Perhaps you'll concern yourself with your own mate," Hannibal smiled pleasantly, shifting to pick Celeste up into his arms and cradle her close. "Good evening, Patrice. Stephane."

The pair stood in silence as Hannibal followed his Omega out to the school car park, Celeste's perceptive, maroon eyes watching them over Hannibal's shoulder. She smiled and gave them a cheery wave before they disappeared from sight as Hannibal carried her away.

"Papa?" Celeste asked quietly as they neared their car.

"What is it, maža žvaigždė ?" Hannibal purred in response.

"Laurent's Mama tried to hit Mama," she noted, frowning.

"He certainly tried to, didn't he?" Hannibal replied to her observation. "Your Mama was quite safe though, don't worry. Patrice could never hurt Mama."

"Why did he try?" Celeste mumbled, frowning. "Hitting is rude."

Hannibal hummed in response, smiling at Will as he scowled against the bonnet of Hannibal's car and waited for them. "He tried to because he lost his temper."

"But you said we should never lose our temper, not if we can help it," Celeste protested.

"It's just as well your Mama kept *his* temper then, isn't it?" Hannibal asked, quirking a brow at her. "I'm sure Patrice would have thought twice about trying to hit Mama, otherwise."

"Why?" Celeste asked, curiously look up at Hannibal as he stroked a hand down her back.

"Because Patrice wouldn't have stood a chance against your Mama's temper."

"Mama never gets angry like that though," Celeste argued, still frowning.

"Never at you, meilė," Hannibal provided, pulling the keys from his pocket to open the car.

"Never at me," Celeste repeated in agreement, turning to grin at Will and run to his open arms.

Chapter End Notes

Apologies for any incorrect French or Lithuanian - I'm but a poor monolingual soul relying on Google translate.

2

Chapter Notes

> Proof reading my own work before posting a chapter isn't a strength of mine, apologies for any mistakes or errors <3

"Graham, I need this operational analysis report to move to the top of your priorities," Jules announced, slapping the file down on Will's desk. "Whatever else you're working on, it can wait. We've been assigned this case from the Lyon headquarters."

Will looked up through his glasses, glancing over the Beta before him. Jules seemed nervous, jittery.

"What's so important about this one?" Will asked, carefully reaching for the paperwork.

"Teenage Omegas going missing in Malaysia," Jules gritted out, pulling out the chair at the desk opposite Will's. "There was a family that arrived in Paris last month, granted asylum. They've made reports that their daughters were kidnapped by an Alpha that we've managed to make a match to within the FBI's Organised Crime unit data. We don't have any biometrics, but the family has confirmed a match from a line up of photographs the FBI has given us. "

"This Alpha is wanted in the States by the FBI?" Will asked, pouring over the file. "Then why aren't they taking this case? Why hasn't an arrest already been made if they've got a positive ID?"

"They are taking the case. We're just... assisting. He'll be arrested by the FBI and sentenced there, of course; they need a liaison with the Malaysian police first. This Alpha disappeared off the face of the earth when the trafficking ring he was running in North America started to collapse. There's concerns from the family that their reports to police in Malaysia about their daughters have fallen on deaf ears because they're in this Alpha's pockets. You know how it goes; all it takes is the right bribe, the right price for officers to turn blind eyes."

"People don't just disappear," Will retorted, frowning at the pictures of the girls that were missing. "What about the girls? Have they been found yet?"

So young. As young as he'd been, when he'd been snatched from the sidewalk in Louisiana eleven years ago. He traced a finger over the faces of the sisters in the photographs, his heart clenching at the memory of that chloroform soaked rag pressing against his face and that hand clamping down over his shoulder like claws as the sweltering summer heat licked at his skin.

Were the girls already meeting the same fate that he had? Alone, hurt and terrified as the hands of strangers inflicted all sorts of unspeakable cruelties on them?

"Not yet. Look, Will..." Jules sighed. "I'm just going to warn you now, but the whole department is going to be working on this. This Alpha they've managed to get a match on from the FBI database, he's..."

Will turned the page of the report over in the file before Jules could finish, feeling the blood drain from his face.

There, printed in glossy paper and staring right back up at him was Gregory Brandt.

Will supposed it was only a matter of time until he was confronted with Gregory Brandt's existence again; the twin who got away.

Will's occasional consultation for Jack Crawford and the FBI when they had settled in Paris four years ago had wound up landing him working for Interpol, specifically for a branch that investigated crimes of the exploitation of Omegas. Trafficking, in particular; Will's job, his team's job, was criminal intelligence analysis. They joined the dots and made the links that unearthed Omegas who were forced into criminal activity, sexual exploitation, even organ trafficking - *that* was a particularly grisly area of Will's job.

There had been reluctance about hiring Will, of course. Despite the fact the branch was devoted entirely to Omega exploitation, he was the only Omega in the department, a position he'd had to prove himself worthy of. Will had no choice but to reveal his past, his own exploitation, when he'd gone through the screening process. He couldn't deny he'd been trafficked and exploited himself as a teenager, as it was written in black and white when his profile had been flagged up on the database as a civilian who'd been caught up with Omega trafficking. His past had made the department wary of hiring him, scared he'd be too vulnerable and too emotional to do the job. How could an Omega who'd been so viciously exploited as a child stomach the work they did every day?

He was too valuable, of course; he made leaps no one else on the team could, connected the missing links that were seemingly impossible dead-ends when everyone else was ready to give up.

Jack Crawford's esteemed recommendation of Will's capabilities also didn't hurt in securing Will's position, he supposed.

When Gabriel Brandt had died, Will thought his brother may as well have died too. Gregory Brandt had fled Baltimore, leaving no trace; a move only vast amounts of money and turned blind eyes could have made possible, of course. But the gruesome way in which Gabriel had been murdered was obviously not enough to keep Gregory with his head buried in the sand, hiding under a rock. Now he was active again, active enough to have been picked up by Interpol.

"Gregory Brandt couldn't help himself, could he?" Will muttered darkly, glaring at the report. "It wasn't enough to make his fortune selling Omegas the first time round. I suppose he

couldn't resist the chance to start up auctioning kids off again now he thinks the dust has settled."

"They'll get him, Will," Jules assured him, pushing his own glasses up his nose. "You'll make sure of it. We all will."

Hannibal knew there was something off with Will the moment he slid into the passenger seat of the car. It wasn't obvious to the naked eye, even, but only through their bond. A strange, psychic pull that Hannibal felt like a tug in his gut and twinge at his throat where the scars of Will's teeth lay over his mating gland. Will's face was bright, warm, excited; but Hannibal still felt that glimmer of *something* being not quite right as Will sat beside him.

"Is everything alright, Will?" Hannibal asked after Will had leant over the console and kissed his temple.

"Of course it is," Will smiled. "Why wouldn't it be?"

Hannibal paused for a moment. "No reason; I merely thought I sensed something wrong through our bond. Perhaps I was mistaken."

"I'm fine, Hannibal," Will assured him as Hannibal began their journey to the hospital. "A little nervous though. Maybe that's what you felt?"

"That's probably it," Hannibal agreed. "Are you feeling apprehensive about your first scan?"

Two weeks after his last heat had ended, Will had emerged from their ensuite trembling but smiling as he brandished a positive pregnancy test to Hannibal. He'd cried into Hannibal's chest, grinning the whole time through his tears. Hannibal had simply held him, kissed every inch of his face, and purred words of praise to him.

"I told you that we wouldn't have to try past this heat," Will had teased him, scrubbing the tears from his face.

"No," Hannibal had agreed. "It would appear not."

Will had gone in for early blood work to confirm the pregnancy, and they were now at Will's first scan. He was only eight weeks gone, but Hannibal had wanted him to have a scan as soon as possible. Their first ultrasound appointment had been at eight weeks with Celeste too, as although Hannibal would never admit it to Will, Will's miscarriages at Muskrat Farm spurred him into precaution. The sooner they could see their baby was healthy and developing as they should be, the better, as far as Hannibal was concerned.

They were shown straight through to the dimly lit room, greeted by their sonographer. He was a middle aged Omega, dark hair streaked through with grey and leaving him with a salt and pepper effect. Will couldn't help but find warmth in his smile. His ID badge glinted with the name 'Hugo' against his scrubs.

"How are you feeling today, Mr Graham?" Hugo asked, spreading the too-cold jelly along Will's abdomen.

"Excited. Nervous. Kind of sick," Will replied, smiling sheepishly. "My morning sickness seems to have started already."

Hugo gave him a sympathetic look.

Will closed his eyes, leaning back against the bed as he focused on the sensation of the probe pressing over his stomach firmly, the warmth of Hannibal's hand in his own. He let out a deep breath.

Hugo had been too quiet for too long.

"Is everything alright?" Will asked, opening his eyes again.

"One moment, please," Hugo said with a smile that looked a little strained, rising from his seat swiftly. "I just need to confer with your obstetrician."

Will felt like the bottom of his stomach had dropped out as Hugo disappeared out of the room.

"Hannibal," he gulped, shifting to look at his mate. "Why is he... what's wrong?"

Hannibal kept his face smooth; it wouldn't do any good to show Will any of his own stress right now. "I'm sure everything is fine. Perhaps he just needs a second opinion on something."

"But what if there's something *wrong*?" Will hissed, eyes widening with panic.

Hannibal hesitated. "*If* there is something amiss, then we will face it together, Will. Let's wait until your doctor comes back though, yes? We don't know what it is yet."

"I can't lay here waiting to know if there's something wrong with this baby," Will protested, sitting up stiffly. "Can't you look at the screen and see for yourself? You'll be able to tell what's wrong, won't you?"

"Will-"

"Mr Graham," Hugo announced, stepping back inside of the room. "Apologies for having to step out for a moment. Please, could you lay back? Dr Karfis won't be long checking your ultrasound. We just need to confirm something."

"Confirm *what*?" Will demanded, laying back down angrily as his obstetrician entered the room.

Will's obstetrician, Dr Karfis, smiled apologetically at Will. She turned her head to the screen where the ultrasound image was displayed, hidden from Will and Hannibal's view. Hugo resumed pressing the probe against Will's skin, their heads hunched together as they looked at the screen.

"Avais-je raison?" Hugo murmured, glancing up at Dr Karfis.

Dr Karfis squinted her eyes at the screen, tilting her head. " Oui. Comme vous vous en doutiez, c'est juste là."

"I can understand you, you know," Will muttered viciously at the pair, glowering. "*What* exactly is right there? What's wrong?"

Hugo cleared his throat, glancing at Hannibal wearily before drawing in a breath. "The fetus is smaller than expected for eight weeks Monsieur Graham. Normally we would want to double check the timing of your heat ending, to ensure you are as far along as you expected, but a miscalculation of dates is not the problem here."

"How much smaller than expected?" Hannibal cut in this time, leaning forwards with a frown as he continued to grip Will's hand.

"Usually it would be a cause for concern, but..." Hugo trailed off, glancing to the screen again as if in disbelief. "The reason the fetus is smaller than expected is because it is having to share your womb, Monsieur Graham."

"Share my... I'm having twins?" Will deadpanned, heart jarring to a halt in his chest.

Dr Karfis smiled carefully. "Not quite. We detected three heart beats, three individual amniotic sacs. You're pregnant with triplets, Will."

Will and Hannibal sat in stunned silence in Hannibal's car in hospital parking lot.

It was Will who finally broke the silence.

"Is this... I guess this is a prime example of that saying; be careful what you wish for," Will croaked into the thick quiet of the car.

Hannibal turned to look at him, face still a picture of shock that would have been funny to Will if he hadn't been feeling his own shock reeling throughout his brain.

"I..." Hannibal trailed off, at a loss for words - which he never was.

"Jesus Christ, Hannibal," Will exhaled, burying his head in his hands. "Fucking *triplets*."

"Yes," Hannibal replied weakly. "Triplets."

Will snapped his head up to look at him, displeased with the response. "Well Doctor Lecter, it seems you've gone well and truly above and beyond this time. Couldn't have just knocked me up with one fucking kid, could you? You had go and knock me up with *three*."

"I cannot shoulder all the responsibility in that, Will," Hannibal breathed out, staring ahead. "The particulars of cell division are unfortunately out of my control."

"We're having *three*," Will stated heavily into the car, still in disbelief. "I can't..."

Hannibal drew in a deep, shuddering breath, finally turning to look at Will. "Are you displeased?"

Will blinked, sitting back. "Not... displeased. I just... I wasn't expecting this. At *all*."

"No," Hannibal smiled faintly at him. "But here we are. Are you... this is still what you want?"

Will flinched, glaring at Hannibal. "Still what I want?"

"You wanted another baby Will," Hannibal said softly. "And now we're faced with a predicament we weren't quite prepared for."

"I haven't changed my mind. I want... I *want* this. I do; I'm just trying to wrap my head around the 'how' of the situation."

"Triplets are... uncommon," Hannibal offered, still quite clearly shaken.

Will couldn't help it; he burst out laughing. Hannibal turned to look at him, confused, which only made Will chuckle even more. He shook his head almost manically, feeling as though the ultrasound scan had been a strange dream.

"There's *three* of them, growing right inside of me as we speak," Will choked out in an odd laugh-groan that made Hannibal wince. "Do *you* still want to do this?"

Hannibal tangled their hands together across the console, the look in his eyes earnest as he gazed at Will. "Yes, Will; I know we weren't expecting this but that doesn't mean my mind has changed."

"How are we going to manage three? How am *I* going to manage three?" Will muttered to himself, more thinking aloud than asking Hannibal.

He answered anyway. "We will manage. I won't lie and say I expect having triplets is going to be easy, but we're going to work through it together. Your health is the most important thing right now - no doubt the next few months are going to be challenging."

"It's going to be constant hospital visits, isn't it? You, hovering over me like you're scared something could go wrong at any minute?" Will asked sullenly, staring at the building of the hospital.

"The hospital visits will be inevitable. You're going to need more check-ups than usual to monitor the pregnancy is running its course smoothly."

"God, can you not talk about it like *that?* Like you're one of those doctors back inside the hospital?" Will grumbled irritably. "I don't need you to be medical and clinical with me throughout this Hannibal, I need you to be my mate."

"And I will be," Hannibal assured him. "But I won't be able to suddenly stop acknowledging the increased medical complications you may face. You're going to be putting your body through an enormous amount of changes and risks, mylimasis."

"I know that," Will gritted out past his teeth, clenching his jaw. "We just spent the last hour listening to my doctor list every possible risk under the sun about being pregnant with triplets, all the tests and check-ups they're going to have to do. I'm going to have to be put under and have them cut out of me in a couple of months. Start reeling off the complications of premature birth and low birth weight and I swear to God Hannibal, I - "

"Will," Hannibal interrupted carefully, reaching to tilt Will's face towards him by the chin with his fingertips. "It's my job to look after you. It's my *only* job, the only thing that matters to me in this world. I will do everything I can in the next few months to make sure you're safe."

Will stared at Hannibal for a brief moment before his eyes started to narrow and he drew back to look at the Alpha. "Why do I feel like there's an undercurrent to that sentiment?"

"Because you are perceptive as ever, my love."

"To make sure I'm safe," Will parroted Hannibal's words from a few seconds ago. "That has implications, doesn't it?"

"Are there not implications to most things?"

"Stop answering my question with a question of your own; you'd choose my health over our children, wouldn't you?" Will shot back at him accusingly.

Hannibal watched his mate's hand unconsciously flutter to settle protectively over his abdomen. "Is this the conversation you wish to have right now, Will?"

"If something happens during this pregnancy, or when it's time for them to be born... who are you going to save Hannibal?"

A brief second passed, as heavy as lead in the atmosphere of the car. "You. If faced with the predicament of a life-threatening incident caused by this pregnancy, I would choose your health, your safety, Will."

"You'd let these children go, over me."

"I would."

Will turned his face away from Hannibal, face blank and emotionless in a way that Hannibal knew the Omega had crafted to perfection over the years to seal the simmering emotions beneath the surface of Will's demeanour.

The silence was nearly unbearable.

"There's something I need to tell you," Will announced flatly, eyes hard and staring out the car window; Hannibal knew he wasn't seeing the entrance of the hospital, the greying sky

above them, the tarmac of the floor beneath them.

Where Will's mind was, or why it was somewhere else currently, Hannibal didn't know. The Omega was so very talented at slipping away in his mind when he needed to, wanted to; Hannibal was not invited, only subject to watching and wondering where Will had gone.

Hannibal waited.

Will took a deep breath, steeling himself. "I'm going to kill a man, and I want your help."

3

Hannibal bit his tongue at the sound of the cupboard door slamming right next to his head as he stood over the counter, carefully peeling the skin off of the root ginger in his hands.

Will said nothing as he turned on his heel and walked away from Hannibal, mug in hand that he'd retrieved from the cupboard that he'd just slammed shut. The smell of his mate's anger, his betrayal, sat palpable and thick in the air like smog.

Will turned again, stopping by the counter on the other side of he kitchen and leaning against it. He crossed his arms just above his slowly growing stomach, eyes hard and jaw clenched tight.

It had been a week since the scan, since they'd discovered they were expecting triplets, and a week since Will had announced his plans for murder - expressing his desire for Hannibal to assist.

Hannibal had said no. Will had barely spoken a word to him in that week since.

Hannibal sighed, placing the knife down gently on the chopping board and turning to face Will.

"How much longer do you plan on keeping this up for?" Hannibal began, eyes shifting between Will's ocean blue eyes and the soft curve developing in his lower abdomen.

"How much longer do I plan on keeping what up for?" the Omega retorted, voice flat and harsh.

Hannibal regarded him for a moment, inhaling the waves of anger and bitterness coiling in the air around them. "When you are angry with me because you perceive to have been wronged by me in some way, your behaviour becomes passive aggressive. You limit the amount of conversations we have, spend as little as possible time in the same room as me and cease all physical touch between us. The proverbial cold shoulder, as one might say."

Will didn't move a muscle, his face still devoid of emotion. "Are you going to agree to help me?"

"Am I going to agree to help you travel to the other side of the world so you can find and kill a man in hiding whilst you're carrying our children?" Hannibal asked, tilting his chin up. "No, Will. I am not."

"Then I plan on keeping 'this' up until I've accomplished what I intend to do, with or without your help."

"And when will that be? Because you know full well I cannot stand by and simply allow you to leave and set off on some revenge driven mission whilst pregnant and vulnerable."

"*Allow* me?" Will spat, mouth curling downwards in disgust. "I'm sorry, I wasn't aware I needed to ask your permission to leave home. Let me just go and take my shoes off so I can live up to my 'pregnant and barefoot' role I've apparently now been assigned."

"You know that's not what I'm talking about, my love," Hannibal sighed softly. "If we did not already have a daughter who needs us and three more children on the way, do you not think Gregory Brandt would have been dead by now?"

Will shrugged away from the counter, stepping closer to Hannibal until they were inches apart. Will stared into Hannibal's eyes, blazing and stormy as anger seeped from his pores. Hannibal's palms itched to reach out and soothe that anger away, but he knew any touch between them now would not be met kindly.

"You spent so many years taking lives and making it into an artform," Will murmured into the air between them. "You killed like you were *God*; and now you stand there telling *me* that Gregory gets to live?"

"Don't you realise I wish I could be a part of this with you?" Hannibal half pleaded with Will. "Do you know how I've dreamt of you finally Becoming what you have the potential to be?"

"All your fucking whispering about that darkness inside of me, about how you wish I could let myself reconcile with the parts of me I keep under lock and key," Will grinned bitterly. "Where's all that desire for me to tear flesh from bone now?"

"It's still there," Hannibal insisted, giving in to the urge to wrap his fingers around Will's wrists. "My *need* for you and our children to be safe outweighs that desire. It outweighs everything else in this world, and it always will. Do you understand?"

"We would be safe," Will snarled, baring his teeth. "Don't you think I'm capable of looking after myself? That I would be safe with *you* by my side? That Celeste would be safe for a few days with Abigail, or with Margot and Alana?"

"Brandt's death is not worth compromising your safety. There's always a chance something could happen if we found Brandt, and it's not a risk I'm willing to take when we have children. Our family is too important, don't you see? You and I were doomed creatures before we met each other Will; don't throw away everything we've managed to create for ourselves, our *future*, for the sake of seeking revenge."

Will pried his wrists out of Hannibal's hands, shaking his head. "When you found me in Taihape, tell me what you said, Hannibal. Tell me what you promised me."

Hannibal stiffened. "Will."

"Shall I remind you?"

"I promised I'd stop killing," Hannibal gritted out. "I have."

"What else?" Will pressed, eyes shining almost manically.

"I promised to do whatever it was that would repair our relationship. To make you happy. To stay by your side."

"Do you understand how important this is to me?" Will muttered, eyes flickering across Hannibal's face.

"I do," Hannibal answered quietly. "I do, Will."

"You just don't care, do you? You're just going to go back on your promise."

"I *understand*," Hannibal couldn't help but snarl. "I understand more than anyone about justice and revenge, Will. When I was found in the forest, mute and starving and covered in blood, do you not think I felt exactly how you feel now? I watched grown men kill my sister, rip her apart and *eat her*. Don't you think I know what you're experiencing? I wandered that forest, waded through swamps and nearly froze to death just to make sure all of those men died whilst they still had pieces of her flesh between their teeth. I *know,* Will."

"Then why won't you help me now?!" Will yelled suddenly, throwing his hands in the air. "You got that retribution, don't I deserve to seek mine?"

"There is no such thing as retribution for what they have done for you," Hannibal growled. "All of them, from the man who drugged you and took you, to the Brandt twins auctioning you off, right down to Mason Verger. Killing Gregory won't fix anything now."

"You don't get to decide what will or won't offer me retribution!" Will snapped, slamming his hand down on the counter with a bang. "You skinned Gabriel Brandt and strung him up like a doll! You tortured him and cut his organs out and let him die *slowly*, because you *wanted* to! What about what I want, now that I know where his twin is? He's the last fucking person I know for a fact was a part of my abduction and I'm supposed to just live with that? I can't stay in this fucking house, this fucking city, a day longer Hannibal. I *need* to do this, whilst I still can, whilst I know where he is!"

Hannibal winced internally; Will, of course, had a valid point. Hannibal murdered Gabriel Brandt and presented him as a Ripper kill. It had felt fantastic. Now he was denying Will the chance to take the life of the last person who'd been a part of his mate's years of suffering.

"I don't have long left," Will growled. "Soon the chances of me going after Brandt are going to be next to nothing, because he will have either caught wind of Interpol sniffing around him or I'll be fucking incapacitated with this pregnancy."

"Will," Hannibal pleaded, his stomach twisting. "I wish - "

Tiny, bare foot steps slapped against the kitchen tiles.

"Mama? I heard shouting..."

Celeste stood in the doorway, rubbing her eyes sleepily, her chocolate coloured curls breaking free of the meticulous braid Hannibal had fixed her hair into before putting her to bed.

Will was gone from in front of Hannibal immediately, on the other side of the kitchen in the blink of an eye. He crouched down to kiss Celeste's forehead, stroking her hair back from her face and scenting her gently. Celeste slumped into his embrace, half awake, and buried her face in the crook of his neck as she looped her small arms around his neck.

"I'm sorry," Will whispered gently, all the rage that had been oozing from him before completely vanished. The kitchen now smelt of those soothing, warm pheromones Will so readily emitted for Celeste.

"Did you wake up because you heard shouting?" Will purred, rubbing their cheeks together.

Celeste nodded, limp in Will's arms as he gently pulled her against him and picked her up. "Were you shouting at Papa?"

"Ssh, petite étoile," Will hushed her. "On va te remettre au lit."

Celeste's face scrunched up. "But Mama, I don't want you and Papa to fight."

"We won't," Will promised, refusing to look over at his mate where he still stood by the counter. "Back to bed now, alright?"

Celeste lifted her head to blearily look around for Hannibal, maroon eyes identical to his settling on him. "Can Papa come too?"

"I'm coming now, don't worry," Hannibal murmured, approaching them and kissing Celeste on the forehead when he was close enough.

Celeste was back asleep by the time Will laid her back into her bed, pulling her bed sheets back up around her and sighing. Hannibal bent over to run his nose through her hair, scenting her one last time before they left her bedroom.

Wordlessly, they went to their own bedroom. Will sank into an armchair by the fireplace, watching Hannibal as he lowered himself to sit on the edge of the bed facing him.

"I won't change my mind on this," Will murmured. "Gregory Brandt has to die."

Hannibal said nothing, tilting his head up to stare at the high ceiling of their bedroom, studying the traditional , ornate Parisian ceiling medallions around the lights above them.

"How would you do it?"

The question was so soft and so quiet Will almost didn't hear the Alpha speak.

"How would I kill him?" Will uttered into the quiet of the bedroom, frowning.

Hannibal shut his eyes, head still titled up. "Yes."

Will's skin felt hot all of a sudden. "As slowly and as painfully as I could. I would kill him in a way that he deserves. As much of that death as possible would be delivered by my bare hands."

The ghost a smile flitted about Hannibal's lips. "I have imagined you describing how you would kill countless times in my head. Hearing you say it so simply, so plainly, is so bittersweet for me."

Will clenched his jaw. "Then help me. I know that you *want* to. It's all you've ever wanted, Hannibal."

Hannibal's eyes flickered open at the sound of movement, opening them to find Will resting on his knees at Hannibal's feet, settling himself between his thighs and laying his head on the older man's thigh. Will's hands curled up his ankles and gripped his calves.

"How many times have you pictured us together, stood side by side and covered in blood, swine at our feet?" Will uttered. "Don't you still want that? When I'm offering it so readily to you after I asked you to restrict yourself for me for the last few years? Don't you crave it too?"

"You know that I do," Hannibal breathed, swallowing. "So much."

"We would be a formidable force, Hannibal," Will continued, head heavy against Hannibal's thigh. "Do you really think Brandt stands a chance against us?"

Hannibal smiled wearily. "I appreciate your manipulations, mylimasis. The image you're painting is pleasing."

"Then don't let it just be an image," Will pressed. "Let me show you; haven't you wanted even the barest glance into what I looked like that night I killed Mason? To see what I could be capable of again?"

Hannibal nearly shuddered at the thought, at what Will was proposing.

"Brandt is the last nail in the coffin, love," Will sighed. "I can bury what happened to me when he's suffered at my hands and died by them. I promise you that nothing will happen to me, to this pregnancy. We'll be together, safe. We'll protect each other. There's one of him and two of us, after all."

Hannibal threaded his hands into Will's hair and tugged his head off his lap to meet his eyes. "You can't promise that nothing will happen."

"I know that it won't."

"You can't be so sure."

"You'll keep me safe. That, I am sure of."

Hannibal's fingers tightened in Will's curls. "I can't lose you, Will. I *can't*."

"You won't," Will insisted, eyes wide and pleading. "You won't Hannibal, I promise you that you won't. *Please*... help me see this through."

Silence filled the room. They stared at each other, and Will slowly witnessed Hannibal's resolve weaken, shatter.

The Alpha nodded his head, slowly, once, and Will dove forwards to kiss him with a determination that knocked the breath out of Hannibal's lungs.

Jules sighed, rubbing at the deep frown lines forming on his forehead. "I know you've handed all the paperwork in now but... are you definitely sure about this, Will?"

Will smiled apologetically. "I am. I know I started out on this particular case even more determined than usual because of my... closeness to the subject, but I really have to put my health first. The timings with the case on Brandt and my pregnancy weren't great, I'll admit it. But my mate pointed out I'm prone to letting work stress get to me and wearing me out before I realise it's happening, and I can't afford to do that now that I'm expecting."

Jules nodded tiredly. "I appreciate that. It'll be a shame to lose you on this case though - you would have cut the investigation time in half."

"I'm not sure about that," Will rebuked modestly.

"I mean it. You're an asset to this team," Jules told him earnestly. "But family first, right?"

"Yeah," Will huffed in response, glancing down at his abdomen. "Especially since there's not just one but three new additions to my family."

"You'll have your work cut out for you," Jules smiled sympathetically. "Don't leave it too late to come back to work, though. I'd hate to lose you."

"I don't know when I'll be back Jules," Will admitted, chewing his bottom lip. "I'll keep you in the loop."

"You do that," Jules mumbled, pushing his glasses up his nose and reaching for the lukewarm coffee on his desk. "Good luck, Will. I hope Canada treats you well."

The photocopies of Brandt's case file that were very much *not* legal and seemingly burning through the leather of Will's briefcase momentarily made the Omega feel nauseous.

"Thanks. It's been too long since I saw my sister."

"Amazing," Will remarked, staring at Celeste's unconscious form drooped over Hannibal's lap. "Every time she gets on a flight, she's out like a light before take off."

"She did spend the first few months of her life on long haul flights whilst you were darting from country to country," Hannibal murmured, eyes closed and head resting back on the seat

he was in, fingers absently stroking up and down their daughter's spine.

Will clicked his tongue. "Hush."

Hannibal hummed in response.

Will looked away, the ground beneath them shrinking as the plane ascended higher into the Paris sky. Abigail had moved into their home whilst they were gone, looking after the house and Winston. Their first destination was Montreal, to Alana and Margot. A few days in Canada, and then they'd leave Celeste with Margot and Alana to begin their journey with fake passports and paperwork under false identities to Kabong, Malaysia - Brandt's last known location. After that, Will had no real plan except Brandt's slow, painful death once they found him.

His stomach fluttered. His teeth itched. Retribution was on the tip of his tongue, ready to be swallowed and ready to be consumed upon the spilling of Gregory Brandt's blood.

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